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Participatory and Collaborative Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism: Maghreb & Sahel Regional Workshop

WORKSHOP REPORT
October 9, 2015

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	iii
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
2. BACKGROUND.....	3
3. OVERVIEW OF WORKSHOP APPROACH	5
4. VE CONTEXT & CVE PLANS.....	7
5. GROUP COMMITMENTS & NEXT STEPS.....	14
6. ASSESSMENT OF WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES.....	16
7. LESSONS LEARNED	20
CONCLUDING REMARKS AND ANNEXES	22
ANNEX A: Workshop Binder	
ANNEX B: Descriptions of Workshop Activities	

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CoP	Community of Practice
CoVE-MENA	Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East and North Africa (USAID Project)
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
PEACE IQC	Programming Effectively Against Conflict and Extremism Indefinite Quantity Contract
Sol	Statement of Interest
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VE	Violent Extremism
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Countering Violent Extremism in the Middle East and North Africa (CoVE-MENA) project held a workshop entitled ***Participatory and Collaborative Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism*** for 32 participants from civil society organizations (CSOs) who work with populations at-risk of recruitment into violent extremism (VE) in the Maghreb and Sahel. The workshop fostered regional learning and collaboration on countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts in the region; in doing so it provided participants with a space to jointly analyze the problem of VE and explore opportunities for collaborating to counter VE in their respective communities. The workshop, which was designed and facilitated by FHI 360 and the Salam Institute for Peace & Justice, took place from Monday, September 7, 2015 to Thursday, September 10, 2015 in Casablanca, Morocco.

In the first two days, participants attended introductory sessions on recognizing the drivers of VE and key CVE concepts, engaged in in-depth discussions and problem identification/analysis, and were encouraged to share their varying perspectives on CVE. At the end of the second day, participants took a field visit to the Sidi Moumen area of Casablanca, and were introduced to the work that the Neighborhoods Association IDMAJ is doing with at-risk youth from this marginalized area. Participants engaged in an interactive simulation on the third day, during which they were asked to put themselves in the place of different stakeholders within a fictional community grappling with increasing numbers of youth leaving to join a violent extremist organization (VEO). On the final day, the group engaged in a multi-step needs assessment that helped them identify CVE-related knowledge gaps and capacity needs for their organizations. Each organization then developed its vision and goals for its work on CVE, and together the group identified next steps for exchange and collaboration across the region.

By the end of the workshop, participants had developed a strong sense of community and awareness of the importance of collaboration to respond to VE in their communities and across the region. CSOs formed relationships not only within country groups, but also across borders. Participants reported an increased level of understanding of the drivers of VE in their communities and enhanced confidence in conducting assessments to inform CVE efforts. They expressed satisfaction in the knowledge and skills acquired in designing relevant interventions that include diverse and multiple stakeholders at the local level. Furthermore, although participants highlighted the importance of the workshop as an opportunity to exchange experiences, ideas and information, many also emphasized the need to sustain collaborative learning beyond the workshop. Even more importantly, while the CSOs expressed an interest in working with CoVE-MENA and benefiting from the support it could offer, they also emphasized the need to establish mechanisms for coordination and collaboration that would be sustainable irrespective of CoVE-MENA's support, and beyond the duration of this pilot activity. Accordingly, they agreed to establish a Coordination Committee from among the CSOs represented in the workshop that will assist the coordination of communication within the group, and between CoVE-MENA and the group.

Based on the needs and interests expressed by participants throughout the workshop, particularly on the last day, CoVE-MENA committed to five follow-on areas of support:

1. The creation of an online Community of Practice (CoP);
2. Sharing resources, tools, information and events with the group;
3. Sharing workshop documents, materials and photos;
4. Supporting exchanges and trainings for networking and capacity building; and
5. Organizing another workshop within the next year.

Following the workshop, both the participants and CoVE-MENA have put in motion some key steps to fulfill the commitments they made. CoVE-MENA put in place a foundation for the CoP by establishing a secret Facebook group to facilitate and maintain mutual learning and communication among the participants, and it has started sharing CVE-related opportunities, resources and events. Participants have joined the group and started using it to communicate about their activities and their progress on commitments. CoVE-MENA and the Coordination Committee have also discussed developing a plan for next steps that will be shared and finalized with the group. In the coming period, CoVE-MENA will coordinate closely with both the participants and USAID to sustain the momentum created in the workshop, and will continue building a strong community of practitioners in the Maghreb and Sahel that collaborate on CVE interventions within their countries, and across the region.

2. BACKGROUND

CoVE-MENA Task Order

In September 2014, USAID's Middle East Bureau awarded FHI 360 a Task Order under the Programming Effectively Against Conflict and Extremism Indefinite Quantity Contract (PEACE IQC) to support the Bureau's ability to understand and address democracy and governance issues related to conflict and VE. The 42-month CoVE-MENA Task Order (September 2014 - March 2018), has been implemented by FHI 360 with partners SSG Advisors and Mercy Corps, and consists of three main components: (1) research studies, (2) training and knowledge generation, and (3) bilateral and multi-country pilot programs. A workshop entitled ***Participatory and Collaborative Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism*** was the first activity in a Maghreb & Sahel pilot under CoVE-MENA's third component. This workshop was organized by FHI 360 in collaboration with the Salam Institute for Peace & Justice.

Morocco Workshop

The overarching goal of the workshop was to foster regional learning and collaboration on CVE efforts in the Maghreb and Sahel by providing participants with a space to jointly analyze the problem of violent extremism and explore opportunities for collaboration to counter VE in their respective communities. The objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Foster learning, exchange, and relationship-building among organizations working to address the drivers of violent extremism in vulnerable communities in the Maghreb/Sahel;
2. Enable participants to recognize the drivers of, and resiliencies to, violent extremism in their communities;
3. Build the foundational skills for the facilitation of positive and community led efforts to counter violent extremism through collaboration with diverse stakeholders at the local level;
4. Sustain learning, networking, and dissemination of information and resources among participants through an online CoP following the training; and
5. Identify participants' needs for further CVE capacity development.

CSO Selection & Workshop Participants

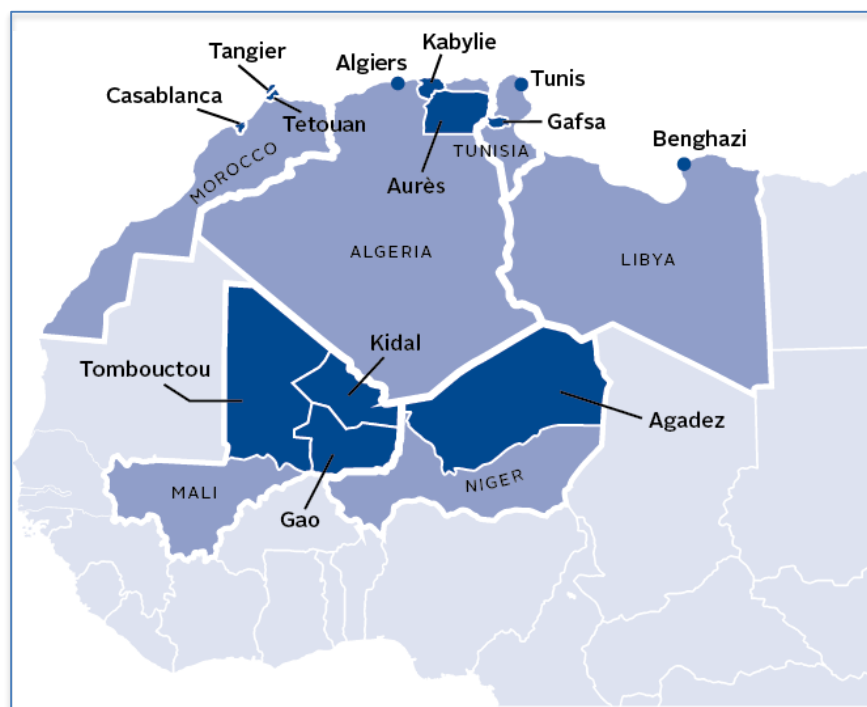
Ultimately, 32 representatives from 17 CSOs working in a range of localities in Algeria, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia participated in the workshop. Each participating CSO sent both executive-level and program-level representatives to ensure that a diversity of individuals contributed to the workshop dynamics. 38 individuals from 19 CSOs were initially invited to participate but, because of travel issues, four of those invited could not attend, and another two participants were unable to join due to unexpected health or work issues.

Selection of the workshop participants was conducted through careful consideration of pre-determined participant parameters and eligibility criteria and in close coordination with USAID. Shortly after the launch of the project, CoVE-MENA started conducting desk research and consultations with key stakeholders in each country - including USAID, International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs), local organizations and practitioners - to compile an expanded list of CSOs that focus on or have worked in projects relevant to CoVE-MENA's

focus areas. Through its research, the team also identified localities particularly vulnerable to VE within each participating country.

From this large pool of organizations, CoVE-MENA shortlisted 38 CSOs, vetted by USAID missions, who were invited to submit statements of interest (Sols). The Sol forms sent to participants addressed key eligibility criteria such as localities of focus, program areas, background in CVE, commitment to participating in a CoP, and participant objectives for the workshop. Once the completed Sols were received, CoVE-MENA assessed the information against pre-determined eligibility criteria and determined a list of CSOs invited to register. CSOs from Tunisia and Casablanca, Morocco were sent Sols and registration forms at a later stage, as the process of identifying and vetting candidates took longer than that of the rest of the group. Four CSOs from Algeria, three from Libya, three from Mali, five from Morocco, two from Niger, and two from Tunisia registered. Pre-workshop surveys were administered to the participants in order to gain further feedback on their current capacities, goals, networks, and ideas for further support.

The participants in this workshop represented a range of backgrounds, demographics, and experiences with CVE, providing for a diverse and inclusive workshop. There were 8 women and 24 men. The majority of participants spoke both French and Arabic, and several were able to understand English; there were only a few individuals who were able to communicate in only one language, and with the multitude of bilingual support staff and translators, communication was not a problem. The map below indicates the target areas that the CSOs work in, within each country of focus.



CSO Target Locality Map

3. OVERVIEW OF WORKSHOP APPROACH

The highly interactive workshop centered on discussions, elicitive exercises, working groups, simulations, teambuilding activities, multi-media, and cultural sharing. In design, CoVE-MENA took into consideration the feedback that participants had provided about their goals, needs, and capacities in their Sols and pre-workshop surveys. For example, pre-workshop survey results framed the support options document that CoVE-MENA distributed during the first day, and information gathered on organizational backgrounds in the same affected the assignment of roles for the simulation.

Based on adult learning principles, the mixed pedagogy incorporated into workshop activities maximized absorption and retention for participants with a variety of learning styles. Content was crafted to be directly relevant to participants' lives; exercises activated multiple brain centers (rational, emotional, creative, kinesthetic, spatial, visual, auditory, and tactile); conceptual ideas were put into practice and application; and the group consolidated experiential learning through reflection and group processing.¹ The following overview of the workshop demonstrates how this pedagogy was integrated into the curriculum while responding to the workshop's primary objectives.

The first day introduced participants to the workshop, each other, and the field of CVE. The morning involved a welcome panel and presentation, followed by several introductory and icebreaker activities. Facilitators ran an elicitive case study activity in which participants generated their own VE drivers and risk factor categories, which they then compared with the USAID framework. The day concluded with the first of three "Participants' Laboratory" (Lab) sessions, an opportunity for participants to organize themselves for collaboration on future activities. In the evening, facilitators held an optional professional development module on positive youth development programming.

The second day delved into VE problem identification and analysis. First, a group reflection was held, followed by a storytelling forum for selected participants to share their personal and professional experiences related to VE and CVE. Then, participants applied the previous day's drivers brainstorming and the Summary of Factors Affecting Violent Extremism² – hereafter referred to as the “VE Factors Framework” or the “USAID framework” - to mapping and sharing the push and pull factors particular to each country. Participants also went on a field visit to a cultural center in Casablanca's Sidi Moumen district, a marginalized suburb home to the perpetrators of the May 2003 and March 2007 Casablanca bombings. This was followed by a festive dinner at a local restaurant.

The third day included a multi-stakeholder simulation of a community encountering recruitment of youth into VEOs. After going over the fictional context, participants were assigned one of 17 roles according to their actual expertise and organizational background, observed personality, and national/linguistic profile. Participants were provided secret

¹ The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy, Knowles (1980, p. 43); Gardner, Howard, Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice, Basic Books (1993); Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. S., Learning in adulthood, JosseyBass (1999).

² Summary of Factors Affecting Violent Extremism, USAID; http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pbaaa929.pdf

instructions and background information about their roles before launching the live, two-hour simulation. Following the simulation, the facilitators demonstrated how a multi-stakeholder engagement process could enhance collaboration. The day concluded with a reflective discussion on the simulation and the second Participants' Lab. CoVE-MENA had planned to conduct a Gender/Family-Informed Programming optional module, but because of the success of the simulation and the level of participant engagement in it, the team decided to use the time to extend the simulation.

The last day of the workshop covered a needs assessment and brainstorming on next steps for the group. The day began with a visioning and goal setting activity during which CSOs wrote and shared five-year visions on CVE and intermediary steps for both their individual organizations and the group as a whole. Each CSO then assessed the gaps and needs within the organization and in each country by developing a list of assets and constraints they encounter internally and externally in the course of their work; through this activity, CSOs were also able to identify opportunities for collaboration with other organizations that face similar challenges or that have developed assets that are relevant to their needs. Finally, participants worked to prioritize the needs they had identified and took advantage of an extended Participants' Lab to develop and share commitments they made to themselves and each other going forward. The CoVE-MENA team also took the opportunity to state its own commitments to the group on how the project will be able to support CSOs in the coming period. The day ended with an optional module on trauma-informed programming, followed by a closing ceremony.

Throughout the workshop participants came to learn more about each others' diverse home countries. Each day, two 20-minute timeslots – one in the morning and the other before closing – were set aside for cultural presentations during which participants shared their respective country's music, dance, food or traditional dress. Moreover, following the field visit on day two, the participants and organizers got exposure to Moroccan food and music in one of Casablanca's traditional restaurants. These activities focused on enhancing participants' comfort and familiarity with each other and on contributing to a sense of community within the group. This bonding directly contributed to one of CoVE-MENA's primary objectives for the pilot, building a strong and enduring network.

For more information on workshop materials and activities, please refer to Annex A, "Workshop Binder" and Annex B, "Descriptions of Workshop Activities." The former contains all materials and handouts provided to participants, while the latter provides a more detailed description of how activities were facilitated.

4. VE CONTEXT & CVE PLANS

As mentioned in the previous section, during the first two days of the workshop, a variety of activities were used to come to a shared understanding of the main drivers of VE in the Maghreb and Sahel. On **Day 1**, country teams put together profiles of individuals (from randomly assigned attributes) and were asked to identify three reasons why the fictional person may be vulnerable to VE recruitment. Each team posted their three top factors on the wall, locating them in relation to other groups' responses, so that a loosely categorized map was created with four major categories: Ideological, Economic/Social, Geo-Political, and Psychological factors. Most factors on this map were Social and Economic. Examples from the Social category include a sense of injustice, absence of freedom of expression, and education level and quality. Economic factors included poverty, lack of access to employment, and isolation from large cities. The country teams were introduced to the VE Factors Framework and asked to compare their own analysis with USAID's categories. On **Day 2**, country teams were asked to use their own analysis from the previous day, the USAID Drivers Guide, and other relevant information to identify the major VE push and pull factors specific to their country (or region, depending on the CSO's scope).

Below, we outline the drivers and push/pull factors identified by CSOs during the workshop. Participant responses divided by country are also provided in charts.

Primary Conclusions: Drivers of VE

Using participatory methodologies, each country team identified the major factors that render youth vulnerable to violent extremism in their country contexts. Strikingly, the answers in all six countries were quite similar. The two main variables identified were the current level of active conflict in each country, and if joining VE groups was feasible and accessible to young people. Participants opined that in countries where VE groups are present or where few actions have been taken to prevent youth from traveling to join groups elsewhere, youth would be more inclined to be involved in VEOs.

In the Drivers & Resiliencies Case Study, participants intentionally were not introduced to USAID's VE Factors Framework; nonetheless, their responses largely tracked those provided in USAID's guiding summary. After they had formed their own understanding of the factors influencing vulnerability to VE, participants were introduced to USAID's framework and were asked to provide feedback on it, first in the context of a large group discussion and then by inviting them to assess the extent to which each of the drivers in USAID's framework was applicable to their context. The results of the second exercise are detailed in **Table I**.

The primary criticism of the VE Factors Framework was the extent to which it focused on Islam, and on religion in general, as a pull factor. There was widespread agreement that insofar as ideology is a factor (the import of which was debated by the group), *extremist ideology* should be discussed instead of specific religions. The pull factor "existence of radical institutions or venues" should not list, or not *only* list, "mosques and madrassas." Otherwise, the contributions of country teams could largely be organized into categories already used by USAID (socioeconomic, political, and cultural). Within these categories, three areas were highlighted by participants as deserving more attention in USAID's future guiding documents:

Personal Factors: Mental health, isolation, and the exclusion of youth were identified as key push factors. Secondly, participants mentioned a lack of critical thinking skills (due to poor or no education).

Opportunism: Participants frequently highlighted the relationship between arms/drugs trafficking and VE in their countries. Trafficking groups (and militias, in the case of Libya) provide tangible and intangible rewards – money and status – similar to those provided by VE groups. There was no consensus on the import of ideology for those driven by opportunism, as the monetary and status-related benefits did not necessarily mean that ideology was less of (or was not) a pull factor. Many participants suggested that individuals joined VEOs because they were the only available alternative to other armed groups, not always because of ideology.

Media: Participants asserted that social/online media plays a large role in recruiting, particularly to join VEOs in Syria (such as Daesh), and it deserves much more attention.

Table 1: Participant Input on USAID’s Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism

	Positive	Negative
Enabling Environment Factors		
Weak states with ineffective security services	3	3
Poorly governed or ungoverned areas	7	1
State support of VE groups	2	5
Proactive religious agendas	4	4
Pull Factors		
Existence of VE groups with a compelling narrative and attractive objectives	2	3
Existence of radical institutions or venues	5	1
Social networks and group dynamics	7	
Provision of services (responding to unmet expectations and needs)	7	
Greed or the proliferation of illegal economic activities	4	1
Push Factors – Socioeconomic Drivers		
Social exclusion and marginality	13	1
Societal discrimination	5	
Frustrated expectations and relative deprivation	3	
Push Factors – Political Drivers		
Denial of political rights and civil liberties	2	
Harsh government repression and gross violations of human rights	2	
Foreign occupation	2	1
Political and/or military encroachment.		
Endemic corruption and impunity for well-connected elites	5	
Local conflicts	1	
Discredited governments and missing or co-opted legal oppositions	1	
Intimidation or coercion by VE groups.	1	
Perception that the international system is fundamentally unfair and hostile to Muslim societies and peoples	2	
Cultural Drivers		
Islam under siege	1	3
Broader cultural threats	3	
Other Drivers (added by participants)		
Media	3	
Lack of a powerful cultural strategy	1	
Inadequacy of educational system		

Note: in this exercise, participants indicated with a + (positive) if a driver was applicable to / relevant in their country context, and with a – (negative), if it was not.

In the Push and Pull Factors Mapping Analysis, the groups identified VE drivers in their specific country contexts using the USAID framework to guide them. Additional key highlights from the discussion of push and pull factors are summarized below.

The most salient **push factors** for country teams were political, including corruption, inefficient bureaucracy, poor service delivery, ethnic and/or tribal marginalization, and a lack of trust in political actors. Other important push factors included education (a lack of critical thinking skills and educated youth lacking jobs); porous borders and poor policing of people, drugs, arms, money, and ideology across borders; and the absence of social ties and identity.

Insofar as bad governance can be attributed to the legacy of colonialism, and instability to US foreign policy in the region, there was a sentiment expressed that “The West” should acknowledge this reality, as political push factors are often expressed as frustration against foreign intervention when they translate into recruitment themes.

Notably, two countries (Algeria and Mali) said that a strong tribal identity can be a resilience factor for youth who seek identity and belonging, while participants from Libya said that due to the legacy of Colonel Gaddafi pitting tribes against each other, strong tribal identities are actually drivers of VE and other forms of violence in that country context. This exchange highlights once again the need to understand the local context when developing CVE interventions - what works in Mali or Algeria could possibly have damaging effects in Libya. Ideally, such analysis would be conducted at the locality level within each country, too.

In terms of **pull factors**, the groups largely agreed that social media was increasingly important, but personal networks (mostly friends) remained important as well. The messages used to recruit individuals fall into two general categories. The first is a distortion of religious ideological teachings, and a narrative of spiritual fulfillment. The second, sometimes but not always related to the first, is messaging that capitalizes on feelings of frustration, marginalization, and/or anti-Western sentiment.

A skim of the country breakdown of push and pull factors (included in **Table 2**) suggests that ideology or pseudo-religious narratives are compelling insofar as they provide answers to the more primary vulnerabilities: lack of social cohesion, shared identity, and belonging. Regionally, according to the small group of CSOs, the major concern is a large number of disenfranchised, marginalized, and aimless youth; they are more vulnerable to conflict, violence, or antisocial behavior, VE being just one of possible negative outcomes.

Despite reports that poverty is not a factor in VE recruitment, CSO respondents listed money and status as major pull factors. In some countries the money/status awarded by membership in VE groups is related to drugs and arms trafficking. It seems that money as a “pull factor” is most relevant in cases of *relative*, not *absolute* deprivation. In other words, people do not join groups in order to feed their families, but for increased financial rewards and status. One group mentioned the economic lure of VEOs in order to pay a dowry, support family, or otherwise “pay the bills,” but most indicated that the combination of cash and prestige is the biggest draw for vulnerable youth. Other incentives for young men and sometimes women included the possibility of marriage and/or taking sexual partners. Notably, a substantial number of participants identified educated but unemployed youth as a high-risk group. While this is not a group at risk of extreme poverty, it does suggest that economic factors are important in understanding VE drivers.

Table 2: Country-Specific Push & Pull Factor Analysis by CSOs

Push Factors	Pull Factors
Algeria: Localities of Focus: Kabylie, Aurès and Algiers	
Personal (injustice, humiliation) Political (corruption; lengthy and complicated bureaucracy) Lack of belonging; no shared sense of identity to a group or tribe	Radical discourse Drug and arms trafficking; lack of border security/ease of crossing Individual personalities and psychological vulnerability
Libya: Locality of Focus: Benghazi	
Lack of critical thinking skills Education mismatched to available jobs Political corruption, entitlement, frustration Tribal loyalties	Financial and status benefits (for joining militias, VEOs, armed groups) Powerful messaging: “join to fight corruption” or “join to fight the West” or even “join to fight Al Qaeda” Lure of excitement for youth, especially bored youth
Mali: Localities of Focus: Gao, Tombouctou, and Kidal	
Lack of trust in public authorities Poor governance and corruption; porous borders Educated but jobless youth Lack of freedom of religious expression Disintegration of the family and social ties	Presence of foreign groups (opportunity) Social media Financial rewards, especially as related to trafficking Radical discourse Belonging (in the face of ethnic exclusion, discrimination, and clientelism)
Morocco: Localities of Focus: Tangier, Tetouan, and Casablanca	
Educational Economic Personal: identity crisis; spiritual/religious factors, search for belonging Social exclusion and inequality Inadequate political system	Personal fulfillment: get married, economic benefits, spiritual fulfillment Attractive and manipulative messaging through social media
Niger: Locality of Focus: Agadez	
Social injustice; uneven distribution of wealth and power Unemployment Mediocre educational system Radical preachers, many coming from outside Niger Absence of youth policies	Sense of belonging Income
Tunisia: Localities of Focus: Tunis and Gafsa	
Absence of national identity; marginalization and alienation No clear youth inclusion strategy or policies Low confidence in public institutions/loss of control over religious ones Lack of civic and religious values Instability, bad governance, and corruption Unemployment	Media Peer influence Sense of belonging

Primary Conclusions: CVE Capabilities & Plans

In order to address these drivers, participants considered their own capabilities, their country contexts and the attributes of the group, in order to develop their plans for countering violent extremism individually and collectively.

Day Four of the workshop largely consisted of visioning and action planning. In one activity, country teams assessed their internal (CSO-specific) and external assets and weaknesses. Mostly, CSOs listed people as their biggest strength: a sense of volunteerism, interest in the issue, and other human capital-related strengths were some of their main organizational assets. A few CSOs stated that they had good networks, presence in high-risk regions, and multi-sectoral representation amongst their ranks. Externally, the most common asset listed was credibility of CSOs in their communities – although, conversely, relations with government was considered a problem, more often than not. The ability to work with international and national stakeholders, when present, was deemed an asset.

Notably, in terms of organizational weaknesses, participants from five of six countries listed a lack of funding as a constraint; they considered a dearth of resources to be the major constraint by a large margin. One group stated that although their team had a high spirit of volunteerism, they lacked capacity. Some discussed a lack of general community awareness and/or engagement in CVE; others mentioned the difficulty in accessing families of at-risk youth. Another gap was in research about VE in each CSO's local context – indeed, this is an area where the pilot activity hopes to make progress in the upcoming year. Finally, a lack of institutional/state support was found to be a major constraint for many, and for a few, active conflict and instability were primary impediments to progress. **Table 3** at the end of this section condenses individual CSO responses into country-level assets and constraints. Please note that, as countries were represented by more than one CSO that might have different experiences, some of these responses might appear contradictory or repetitive.

Following the assets and constraints assessment, CSOs were asked to set goals for themselves, and for the workshop group, in increments of 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 5 years. In the immediate (3-6 month) future, the majority of CSOs were interested in building and maintaining the network started during the workshop. In addition, several groups highlighted their desire to share what they learned with other CSOs in their region. The overwhelming focus in the initial months was on networking locally and regionally and establishing strong lines of communication. In the longer term (1-5 years), Individually, CSOs were interested in securing funding, and implementing their own workshops and activities in target regions. For the workshop group, most CSOs shared the goal of strengthening the network, sharing capacities, conducting exchanges and trainings, and creating joint action plans for projects.

The CoVE-MENA team will work with individual CSOs to help them develop their plans, and to maximize the impact of the workshop group's collaboration going forward. Details on the profile of individual CSOs – their capacities, needs and plans – are primarily being used for further planning and are available on request.

Table 3: Assets & Constraints

INTERNAL ASSETS AND CONSTRAINTS BY COUNTRY		
INTERNAL ASSETS		INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS
Tunisia	Determine our Mission, vision, theory of change Credibility Presence in the regions A team that is 100% youth Expertise in certain domains Solid Networks of national and international relations	Lack of staff Weak external and internal communications strategy Weak capacity of young (youth org) members Structure of the association
Niger	Network of multiple stakeholders Association throughout country and good CSO collaboration Have the government's confidence	Association members serve as volunteers Insufficient funding and other resources Insufficient training and documentation Absence of national policy to counter VE
Morocco	Experience in researching VE; draft reports Experience working with youth in difficult situations, including those in underprivileged areas Geographical location Access to resources Availability of data from field studies Partnership with state and international assistance Engaged and motivated volunteers	Lack of resources Lack of interest of the government in the topic No specific financing on this topic No guaranteed sustainability Lack of resources for communication and dissemination Lack of resources for technical capacity building; reliance on subsidies
Mali	Human capital Networking experience (national network and early warning system) National coverage Credibility of stakeholders Representation of Muslim community through High Islamic Council Interest in the issue within Islamic Associations	Identification of extremist groups Ability to dialogue with VEOs Funding lacking Diversity of opinions/members Lack of community involvement in fighting CVE
Libya	Large network Members work in different sectors that relate to this issue Still doing work on the ground Members in both governments	Security risks Communication Members spread across the country and the world – (coordination) No funding
Algeria	Presence of large organization with large numbers of volunteers Sense of solidarity CVE implementation experience Capacity to organize local and high level international conferences Curriculum in place Programs working on development and peacebuilding Facilities to organize camps, etc.	Lack of resources to cover the whole territory Funding shortfall Difficulty reaching out to families before their children go to VEOs

Note: This information was gathered from individual CSOs and is not comprehensive or representative. Therefore some of the assets and constraints identified in each country may contradict each other or seem repetitive; the data is not aggregate.

EXTERNAL ASSETS AND CONSTRAINTS BY COUNTRY		
EXTERNAL ASSETS		EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS
Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong civil society Favorable legal framework Role recognized by society Freedom to secure funding Collaboration with several CSOs and INGOs Collaboration with the state institutions and authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to marginalize the role of civil society Attempts of some political groups to pressure and influence civil society Attacks from political parties Political instability Limited Funding Security
Niger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation with the Ministry of Justice/Interior and High Authority for Peacebuilding and traditional chiefs Assistance of future network on CVE in Maghreb Sahel Cooperation with other associations in Maghreb and Sahel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political instability Social crisis Lack of state support Non-definition of the network Lack of means of communication, including a website Direct support needed from volunteers
Morocco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network – can learn about VE from other organizations Openness to working with international organizations on the topic Numerous partners Solid national and international partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No access to international network Lack of collaborative networking Absence of substantial financial resources Reluctance of some parties/stakeholders to deal with this topic Geographical/regional limitations Reliance on national/international political agendas
Mali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of framework agreement People trained Members of Network working on CVE Conflict management/prevention tools Credibility on this issue Contacts and Participation Coordination of actions at national and local level Communal discussions Political will 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of security/safety Institutional Framework External interference Limited resources for CVE Remote areas affected
Libya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacts with militia Good national network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication and movement risks Government is part of the problem so they can't be trusted No international support Shrinking of CSOs
Algeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil society has embraced approach Good relations with groups in other countries Past experience with funders/donors Good expertise in related sectors (education, health, etc) Good cooperation with justice system Good relations with authorities CSO collaboration Youth are engaged and want to take part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior authorization required for these activities Difficulties in establishing partnership Difficult to find funding due to lack of donor interest Suspicion of agenda by youth and community

Note: This information was gathered from individual CSOs and is not comprehensive or representative. Therefore some of the assets and constraints identified in each country may contradict each other or seem repetitive; the data is not aggregate.

5. GROUP COMMITMENTS & NEXT STEPS

One of the goals for this workshop was to foster continued cross-border collaboration and networking beyond the life of the workshop. In addition to holding trust- and team-building activities throughout the four days, CoVE-MENA sought to produce concrete goals and next steps for all parties through the Participants' Laboratories and Day 4 activities. The Labs fostered knowledge exchange and relationship building among organizations, laying the foundation for collaboration in addressing VE in the region and building on the knowledge shared during the workshop. Ultimately, these activities produced various concrete commitments for the participants and CoVE-MENA.

Participant Commitments

The discussions in the Participants' Laboratories highlighted a strong need for more information and knowledge sharing between experts and development practitioners working on CVE in the region. Participants agreed that the first steps towards establishing a network should focus on building and strengthening the capacities of CSOs, and maintaining continuous communication and cooperation among one another following the workshop through an online platform. Accordingly, three immediate commitments were agreed upon by the group:

1. To establish an online CoP, through which information, research, publications and analyses will be shared, and where participants will be able to access information from different organizations working on issues pertaining to VE in diverse environments;
2. To set up a Coordination Committee in charge of overseeing post-workshop steps, which could play a role in managing and coordinating the future activities of the CoP after the pilot. Two volunteer representatives from CSOs, one from the Maghreb and another from the Sahel, were designated the main points of contact in the committee;
3. Based on a suggestion made by a Tunisian CSO, the group decided to collaboratively develop VE country profiles, which would allow the group to identify gaps in available information, and launch a regional research project on identifying VE drivers. A few CSO representatives volunteered to circulate an assessment framework that participants could adapt and use for data gathering and analysis.

In addition to these immediate next steps for the group, participants also came up with ideas for future collaborative activities within their organizations or countries. CSOs committed to sharing key takeaways from the workshop with colleagues in their respective organizations, and many of the CSO representatives mentioned adapting some of the workshop activities for implementation with other CSOs in their countries. Participants concluded that while international donors and organizations can play a role in supporting CVE efforts, civil society organizations are the ones best placed to work with local communities as they are already engaged on the ground and have established relationships with the community. They also suggested that each CSO should dedicate human resources to CVE efforts, in the form of internal CVE-focused working, departments/units, which could later assume other responsibilities within the larger CoP.

Additional long-term objectives suggested by participants included establishing a formal network, launching a website, and/or forming an association of CSOs. However, it was agreed that these options would require significant resources both financial and human, and would require buy-in from governments in the different countries represented. Therefore, these options need to be assessed more closely at a later stage.

CoVE-MENA Commitments:

Based on participant feedback and the availability of resources, CoVE-MENA informed the group that a finalized plan for support would be drafted and shared in the near future, in close collaboration with USAID. This plan would be grounded in the primary commitments CoVE-MENA made at the end of the workshop:

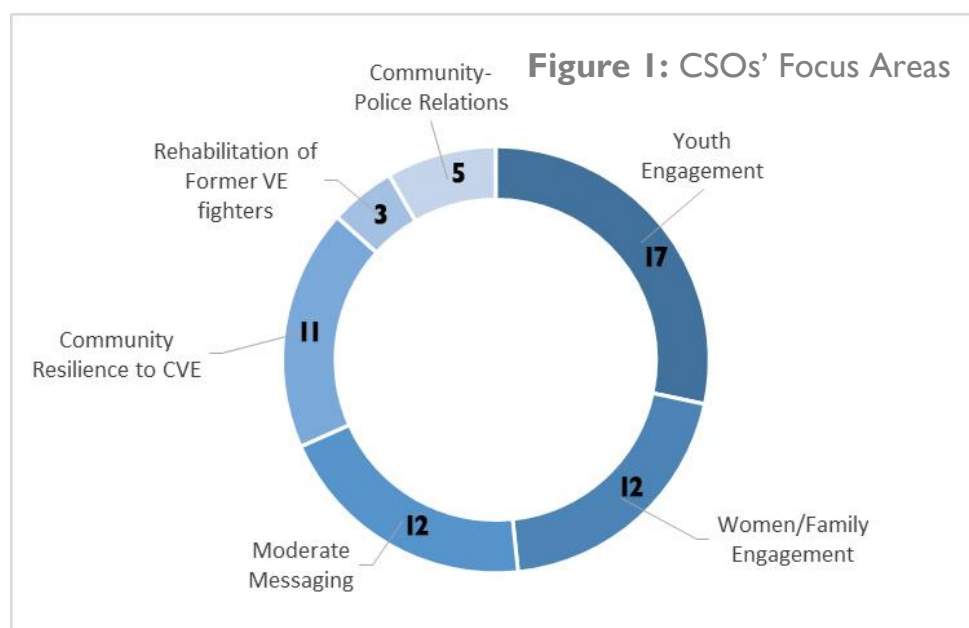
1. Creating and supporting an online CoP;
2. Sharing resources, tools, information and events with the group;
3. Sharing workshop documents, materials and photos;
4. Supporting exchanges and trainings for networking and capacity building; and
5. Organizing an additional workshop within the next year.

To begin addressing commitments 1-3, as mentioned previously, CoVE-MENA has set up a secret Facebook group as the first building block of the CoP. This provides a space for CSOs to discuss and share their experiences, points of view on CVE, and their work in the region. It also helps participants share and access opportunities for funding, capacity-building and knowledge generation around CVE, peacebuilding, and youth engagement, among other things. CoVE-MENA assigned a primary moderator and facilitator of the CoP within its staff who will work closely with the Coordination Committee to guide discussions on the Facebook group and support them in implementing activities. The Facebook group has also been used to disseminate all workshop documents and material among participants. CoVE-MENA is in the process of developing a plan for providing in-kind grants and technical assistance to CSOs in response to its 4th commitment, and for organizing one or more follow-on workshops in the next year, depending on participant needs, to meet its 5th commitment.

6. ASSESSMENT OF WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

CoVE-MENA was ultimately successful in meeting its targets and objectives for the regional workshop. As indicated in the previous sections, the primary objectives for this workshop were to foster exchange and improve networking capacities of participating CSOs and help participants identify the drivers of, and resiliencies to, VE in their communities. In addition, CoVE-MENA sought to meet participants' personal and organizational objectives for the workshop.

The results of a pre-workshop survey and Sols were reviewed to better understand participants' organizational backgrounds; this was reflected in workshop design. According to the Sols, CSOs' programs focused on the areas outlined in **Figure 1** below. All organizations were involved in youth engagement, while there was more variance in other CVE-related program categories. The content of the workshop was therefore designed to enable CSOs to better understand VE drivers from their different programming perspectives.



CoVE-MENA also integrated CSOs' goals into overall objectives and activities. In their Sols, many CSOs highlighted youth engagement and exchange with other CSOs as key goals. Several listed developing skills in community-led CVE and acquiring a better understanding of VE drivers as their most important objectives, along with developing a strategy/plan at the end of the workshop. Activities were thus designed to meet these and other CSO objectives.

The section below outlines important findings based on comparisons between workshop evaluations on Day 0 and Day 4 that assessed the extent to which the workshop achieved its overall objectives. The evaluation forms used a 1–5 scale, with 5 being the highest. When considering the ratings, however, one should note that this was largely an introductory-level workshop, so participants' Day 4 CVE-related ratings may have been affected by their

realizing how diverse CVE interventions can be, or because they want to conduct additional country-specific assessments to nuance knowledge.

Objective 1 - Foster Exchange and Improve Networking Capacities

Representatives from the 17 attending CSOs engaged in collaborative learning activities and peer-to-peer discussions over the four days. CoVE-MENA observed relationships forming within and across country groups. For example, a CSO from Tunisia discussed potential new cross-border initiatives with others during the Participants' Lab, and all participants voiced their interest in future cross-regional collaboration.

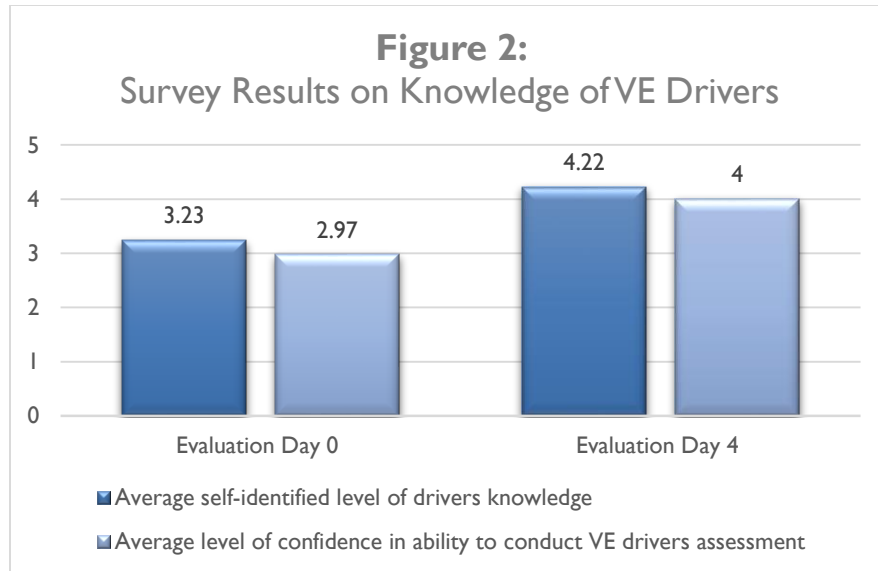
Social Network Analyses (SNAs) conducted prior to and at the end of the workshop showed a marked increase in intentionality around cross-border and local collaboration. The case of the only attending Libyan CSO exemplifies this. Prior to the workshop, the Libyan participants had never engaged with CSOs from other countries in programming. After the workshop, however, they reported having established close contact with at least three other participating CSOs in Algeria, Mali, and Tunisia. Participants from the CSO also planned to sustain relationship building and expressed willingness to participate in joint initiatives with the 16 other CSOs across the Maghreb/Sahel Region. In total, 13 organizations noted in SNAs that their CSOs planned to work on an activity, event, or initiative with three or more other participating CSOs in the future.

To further showcase CoVE-MENA's success under this objective, we refer to feedback received from a participant in an anonymous evaluation: "The workshop was very interesting because it allowed us to learn about real situations faced in different countries, to acquire a new perspective and to build a bridge between all countries of the Maghreb and the Sahel, so that collaborative actions across countries to counter violent extremism could be implemented."

Objective 2 - Help Participants Identify VE Drivers and Resiliencies

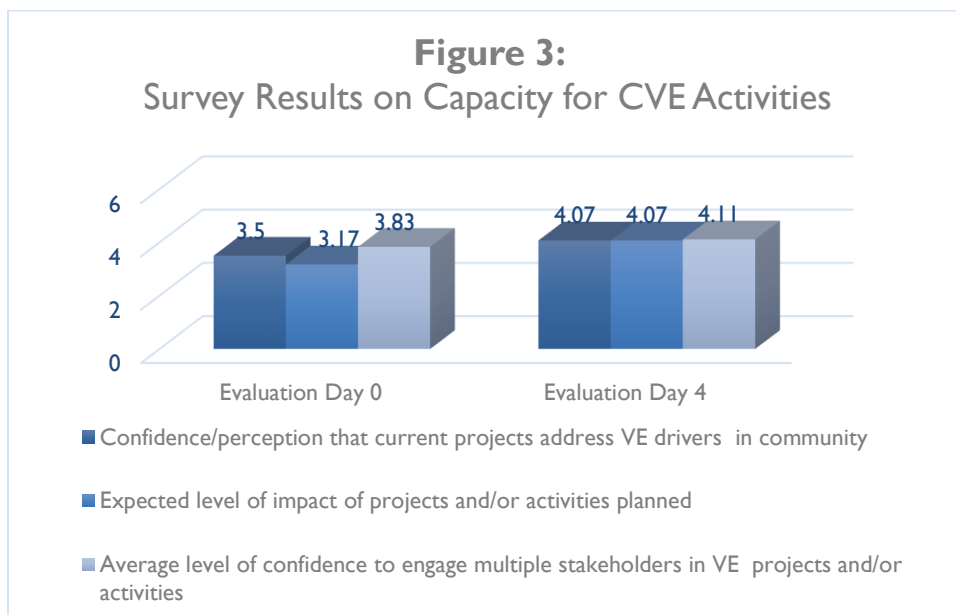
In activities on Days 1 and 2, participants examined the drivers and resiliencies for recruitment into VEOs within their communities, and shared them with others. According to the evaluations and as shown below in **Figure 2**, participants' average self-identified level of knowledge of the drivers of VE increased from 3.23 to 4.22 (31% increase) following the workshop. As previously stated, these evaluation numbers could have been affected by some participants realizing that they needed to conduct an assessment in their countries. Moreover, the workshop increased participants' average level of confidence in their ability to conduct an assessment of the drivers of VE in their own community from 2.97 to 4.00, (35%).

The participants' enhanced level of understanding of drivers of VE and increased confidence in conducting assessments represents one of the most significant workshop outcomes. Country-specific working groups and presentations proved efficient in facilitating informative exchanges among participants representing various organizations and regions within the same country. Guidance on conducting future assessments was also well-received. Participants rated an average of 4.11 in reflecting on their increased understanding of CVE and an average of 4.07 for their improved vision of local CVE efforts after the workshop ended.



Objective 3 - Encourage CSOs to Engage Diverse and Multiple Stakeholders

Participants expressed significant satisfaction in knowledge-building and reported acquiring new skills to design interventions that include diverse stakeholders at the local level. Participants reported, on average, that their level of confidence in engaging multiple stakeholders to implement effective VE interventions in their community increased from 3.83 to 4.11 following the workshop, a 7% increase. Respondents to the Day 4 evaluation also reported an average increase of 16% in their level of confidence that their current projects are addressing VE drivers in their community (3.50 before and 4.07 after the workshop). This points to participants' increased understanding of the breadth of CVE activities. Participants' expected level of impact of future projects and/or activities they design rose from 3.17 to 4.07 following the workshop (28% increase). These statistics are depicted below in **Figure 3**.



The initial level of participant confidence in engaging multiple stakeholders was high, which partly explains the relatively low increase following the workshop. Even so, CSOs were still able to gain further insights into multi-stakeholder engagement through the workshop. One participant stated in an evaluation, "The simulation helped me understand that we need a participatory approach to understand all details of the problem," and that "it is important to coordinate efforts." The participant concluded that "there should be an enabling environment for State/Civil society organizations and other stakeholders' communication" in order develop effective strategies for CVE.

Objective 4 - Support Learning, Networking, and Information Sharing

A pre-workshop survey revealed that participants considered social media and email effective channels to share and exchange information. As a result, many participants expressed interest in sustaining collaborative learning beyond the workshop online. Accordingly, and as a first step in establishing a CoP, CoVE-MENA's secret Facebook group was launched on September 29, 2015 with the aim of facilitating and maintaining mutual learning and networking among the group. Through the Facebook group, explained in further detail under section 5, participants can discuss trends in CVE, pose questions to one another and share relevant resources with the intention of raising awareness, changing attitudes, stimulating exchange, and catalyzing change.

Since launching the Facebook group, CoVE-MENA has already shared several opportunities for participation in CVE and peacebuilding related events, multiple studies and publications pertaining to CVE, and media content pertaining to CVE. Participants have also started using the group to communicate about progress in post-workshop activities, their commitments, and their current programs in relation to CVE.

Objective 5 - Identify Needs for Further CVE Capacity Development

Throughout various phases of the workshop, including in response to the daily evaluations submitted, participants shared needs and proposed solutions to enhance their capacities in conducting CVE programming. Further detailed in Section 4, the external and internal challenges faced by participating CSOs include lack of material and human resources as well as technical expertise, absence of information sharing among CSOs working to address VE, scarcity of research on the subject, and lack of access to opportunities for capacity building and development in CVE. As discussed in the same section, CoVE-MENA will coordinate closely with the participants and USAID to develop necessary plans and activities to respond to CSOs' needs and further develop their capacity to work on CVE efforts.

7. LESSONS LEARNED

This workshop focused on a controversial topic – CVE – in a region that has often been apprehensive about such programming. Therefore, the workshop was useful in informing the role that CoVE-MENA can play in CVE, and how MENA CVE programming and approaches should be undertaken regionally. A primary takeaway is that there is a need and a desire for programs like CoVE-MENA and for CVE support, particularly given that lack of CVE funding was a major obstacle for most CSOs. Although this list is not comprehensive, below we outline key lessons learned that will inform the design of follow-on activities for CoVE-MENA.

The Relevance of CVE. While the language framing CVE can be sensitive for some organizations, CVE as a concept was of genuine interest to all the participants. The CSOs had varying levels of familiarity with CVE approaches, and all welcomed further opportunities for training and support around CVE. The VE Factors Framework requires adaptation to regional and local contexts to be fully accepted and integrated into programming. CoVE-MENA can play role in providing technical support and training, identifying funding opportunities, and adapting the USAID framework to the Maghreb-Sahel context.

The Participatory Approach and Interactive Teaching Methodologies were appropriate for the subject at hand and were appreciated by participants. Given that CVE is an emerging and sensitive program area, CVE methodologies cannot be discussed without eliciting knowledge at the local level. The participatory approach highlighted different perspectives and built consensus around a controversial subject. The approach worked because participants were largely practitioners who preferred a practical and interactive experience over an academic one. Each group benefited from active participation and subgroup discussions. Participants appreciated opportunities to share their own experiences (e.g. the storytelling session); in future workshops CoVE-MENA would create more space for organizations to discuss and present their activities, success stories, and lessons learned.

CSO Organizational Diversity made discussions richer and more effective. CSOs were diverse in terms of programming areas and level of experience in CVE, and this diversity was reflected in their approaches to CVE and visions for progress. CSOs with more experience in CVE were able to guide younger and less experienced CSOs during group activities and exercises, which prevented over-facilitation. It allowed experienced CSOs to take leadership in planning next steps, as evidenced by the establishment of the Coordination Committee.

CSO Geographic Diversity was also important to the success of the workshop. Bringing in CSOs from different countries and localities of focus allowed for rich analysis of common and diverse drivers and resiliencies. One memorable discussion, highlighted in section 4 of this report, touched on how tribal identities can be a source of resilience in some locales and a push factor in others. The cultural exchange, especially as celebrated through the daily cultural sharing activities, added to the novelty of the workshop. Participants' varying language abilities necessitated greater preparation in facilitation and translation, and on occasion barred full interaction amongst participants who were not conversational in the same languages. Even so, translation and facilitating communication among the group went smoothly overall.

Trust and Relationship Building was essential for the success and effectiveness of the workshop. Cultural presentations and the Field and Cultural Heritage Visit on Day 2 played a role in cultivating mutual respect and trust between participants. In the future, CoVE-MENA would give more time and space for trust and relationship building among participants on or prior to the first day to further ensure workshop success.

Timing and Organization: The first and fourth days of the workshop were particularly packed with a string of dense activities. As a result, the group sometimes rushed from one activity to the next, on occasion interrupting participants when they could have benefitted from more time for discussion. Ways to address this in the future include: 1) adding an additional day to the workshop; 2) strategically reducing the number of activities; 3) breaking up large group discussions into smaller groups; and 4) cutting off participants to adhere to strict time limits.

Noteworthy Activities

- The **Drivers & Resiliencies Case Study (Day 1)** was a successful activity and should be considered for future CVE trainings. In this activity, participants generated their own CVE framework by analyzing a set of profiles. The result was a framework resembling the USAID model, but grounded in the local context. The activity could be strengthened with more time for deeper discussion particularly on identifying resiliency factors.
- The **Field & Cultural Heritage Visit (Day 2)** received positive feedback from participants, especially the visit to the Sidi Moumen Cultural Center. Participants enjoyed meeting beneficiaries and witnessing the strong sense of community among youth. This activity was integral to workshop success; CoVE-MENA recommends that future workshops consider site visit possibilities when deciding workshop locations. Unfortunately, several participants were uncomfortable visiting slums; it felt intrusive and voyeuristic. In future workshops, participants' comfort level at site visits will be prioritized.
- The **Multi-stakeholder Engagement Simulation (Day 3)** received strong evaluations. Participants exhibited a great degree of involvement in the live simulation and the subsequent debrief discussion. CoVE-MENA took care to select roles based on individuals' backgrounds and personalities and held the activity after the successful field visit, where participants became more comfortable with each other. This contributed to the simulation's success.
- The **Trauma-Informed Programming Session (Day 4)** was an optional activity that received high evaluations. The session covered biological responses to trauma, the victim-aggressor cycle, and methods for healing and moving out of the trauma response cycle. The success of this session highlighted to CoVE-MENA the dire need for more trauma healing and psychosocial support in CVE interventions.
- The **Participants' Laboratories (Days 1, 3, 4)** drew mixed reviews from participants, but ultimately played an integral part in driving CSOs to jointly plan their next steps; it would be an asset for later workshops. In future Labs, facilitators would more coherently explain and frame the activity at the start of the first session, to improve participant understanding of the purpose of this relatively un-facilitated activity.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND ANNEXES

Concluding Remarks

The Participatory and Collaborative Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism Maghreb & Sahel Regional Workshop created a solid foundation for exchange and collaboration among civil society organizations in the region. This initiative should be built upon to ensure that emerging CVE programming in the Maghreb and Sahel – and perhaps in the Middle East and North Africa generally – is locally relevant and responsive to common challenges in the region. Drawing on lessons learned from this experience, and working closely with the group and its partners, CoVE-MENA will carry out concrete steps to support the community of practitioners in the Maghreb and Sahel in their efforts to implement CVE plans and realize their commitments to address VE both locally and regionally.

Annexes

The following annexes are attached to this report separately.

- Annex A: Workshop Binder
- Annex B: Descriptions of Workshop Activities